

THE SCREENPLAY

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Stage I:
SETUP

Stage II:
NEW SITUATION

Stage III:
PROGRESS

Stage IV:
COMPLICATIONS
& HIGHER STAKES

Turning Point #1:

Turning Point #3:

Turning Point

WITH JIM SOTO

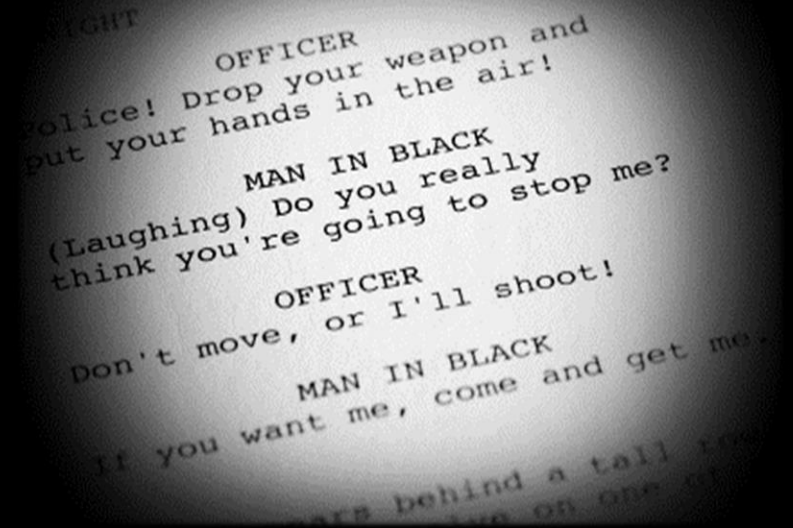
PROD. NO.
SCENE

TAKE

ROLL
SOUND

HOW IMPORTANT IS A SCREENPLAY?

Film is a highly collaborative medium. Most movie viewers probably do not think of the collaboration process each time they watch a movie, but the required teamwork is enormous, as any moviegoer who actually sits through the end credits can tell. In this multi-faceted form of communication, it is hard to identify precisely what the most important part is. However, there is a strong case to conclude that the most vital piece of a film is the screenplay.



NIGHT

OFFICER
Police! Drop your weapon and
put your hands in the air!

MAN IN BLACK
(Laughing) Do you really
think you're going to stop me?

OFFICER
Don't move, or I'll shoot!

MAN IN BLACK
If you want me, come and get me.

...behind a tall ...
...on one of ...



It is impossible to envision a film without a script, as the script is the base for what appears onscreen. It contains what is both seen and heard. This includes a film's structure, its dialogue, and perhaps most importantly a description of the scene's most significant action.

It is impossible to envision a good film with a bad screenplay. Syd Field, the “Father of Structure” and author of Screenplay once said, “You can never make a good movie out of a bad screenplay.” Indeed, it is possible to have a good script with poor production values and eventually a poor film, but not the other way around.



A screenplay is the foundation of a movie. If it's not there, like in any building, it's gonna crumble. This vision of the screenplay as the foundation of the final work supports the idea that it is the most important piece of an entire film.



WHAT IS A SCRIPT?

A general term for a written work detailing story, setting, and dialogue. A script may take the form of a screenplay, shooting script, lined script, continuity script, or a spec script.



1. A **spec script**, also known as a speculative screenplay, is an unsolicited screenplay. It is usually written by a screenwriter who hopes to have the script optioned and purchased by a studio.
2. A **shooting script** is the version of a screenplay used during principal photography. They are distinct from specs in that they make use of scene numbers, and they follow a well defined set of rules on how script revisions should be implemented and circulated.



3. In the script supervisor's **lined script** used during shooting, he draws a vertical line down the page for each different camera setup. Each line designates the start and stop of that setup, a quick note of what the shot description was and whether or not the dialogue was on camera for that setup. This allows the editor to quickly reference which camera setups cover which portion of the dialogue or action.
4. A **continuity script** is a script giving the complete action, scenes, etc., in detail and in the order in which they are shown on the screen. It also includes other features, such as sound effects, actors' accents, emotions, and others. Captioning agencies require a continuity script so that captioners don't miss important dialogue or effects.

WHAT IS A SCREENPLAY?



It's a document text in a (1) **specific format** which contains the (2) **dramatic elements** of the film, as well as indications of (3) **other elements** such as setting, light values, action, and, in general, everything which it is essential to see on the screen from the point of view of the whole narrative; in its relationship to the completed film, a screenplay is sometimes described as being similar to a blue print of a structure.

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SCRIPT & A SCREENPLAY?

Yes. "Script" is a general term not reserved for any specific type of media. "Screenplay" specifically refers to the script of a film or television program; "teleplay" is even more specific, and is only used in reference to television scripts. So a teleplay is a type of screenplay which is a type of a script.



THE TREATMENT

A **film treatment** is a piece of prose, typically the step between scene cards (index cards) and the first draft of a screenplay. It is usually longer and more detailed than an outline (or one-page synopsis), and it may include details of directorial style that an outline omits.

Treatments read like a short story, except they are told in the present tense and describe events as they happen. An original draft treatment is created during the writing process, and is generally long and detailed. It consists of full-scene outlines put together. Usually they are between 30 to 80 letter size/A4 pages (Courier New 12 point), averaging about 40 pages. For example, The Terminator original treatment is 44 pages.

More elaborate forms of the draft treatment are the **step outline** and the **scriptment**. Screenwriters may use a treatment to initially pitch a screenplay, but may also use a treatment to sell a concept they are pitching without a completed screenplay.



STORY TELLING ON A SCREEN

A screenplay is different from a literary work (e.g. novels or stage plays).

Film is a visual medium that dramatizes a basic story line; it deals in pictures, images, bits and pieces of film: We see a clock ticking, a window opening, a woman leaning over a balcony; in the background we hear traffic, a dog barking as we see a couple laughing as their car pulls away from the curb. "Just making pictures."



The nature of the screenplay deals in pictures, and if we wanted to define it, we could say that a screenplay is a story told with pictures, in dialogue and description, and placed within the context of dramatic structure.



I. THE TOPIC

Topic is the subject of discourse or artistic representation. In the screenplay, the theme or topic must be introduced as early as possible. It should be introduced, as a visual, if at all possible, by page 3 of the screenplay or minute 3 of the film. Since film is a visual medium, the screenwriter must strive to write “visually”. So, showing should take the place of telling in screenwriting.



II. THE VOICE

The writer's Voice is the personal writing style of an author, a combination of idiosyncratic usage of syntax, diction, character development, dialogue, etc., within a given body of text or across several works. Voice is what sets YOUR work apart from someone else's, usually in very specific ways. The Tarantinos, Codys, Sorkins, Whedons all have very distinctive voices. We know this from:

- The types of stories they tell
- The way they tell them



Download some screenplays by these writers. Check out what they have on the page: compare/contrast them with a completed film. So, Writer's Voice – provides a sense of individuality to any written work that makes it immediately identifiable.



CHARACTER DRIVEN STORIES vs. PLOT DRIVEN STORIES

Screenplays can evolve two ways: plot driven (or High Concept), when a writer plugs original characters into a tailor-made plot; or character driven, in which the plot is born organically from usually unforgettable characters.





In plot driven stories the story is more important than the individual characters. It is the type of story that often involves alien invasions, a global outbreak of a virulent disease, or some other disaster that will affect humanity on a large scale. Think: Jurassic Park, Outbreak, and The Matrix.

Conversely, in character driven stories they take center stage and drive the plot. In fact, the story is a character itself, how they change, what they learn, wisdom gained or not. Think *Taxi Driver*, *Silence of the Lambs*, and *Rocky*. We come to know the characters deeper and care more strongly about them.



Examples of character-driven stories include:

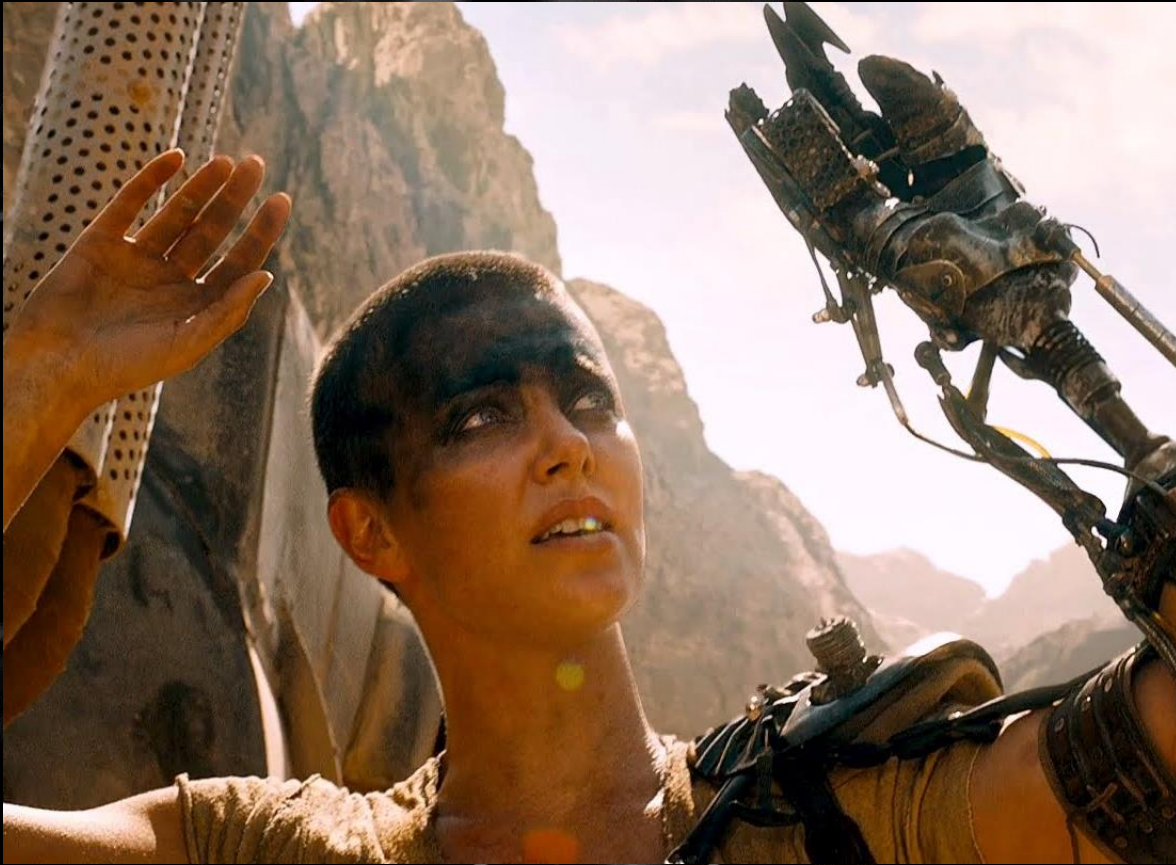
The Quest – the protagonist searches for a person, place or thing and the story usually results in the hero experiencing a large personal change and a gain of personal wisdom about something. Think: Stars Wars, The Lord of the Rings, and The Wizard of Oz.



Examples of character-driven stories include:

The Transformation – the protagonist goes through a process of change and ends with a clarifying incident that enables the character to understand the nature of his experience and how it has affected him. Think: *My Fair Lady*, *Ordinary People*, *On the Waterfront*, and *Juno*.





Examples of plot-driven stories include:

The Pursuit – this type of story is one character or group of characters chasing another. Generally the story is the chase and there are no large characters arcs or introspection. Think, The Terminator, Mad Max: Fury Road, or Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.



Examples of plot-driven stories include:

The Riddle (mystery) – this story is pretty well known by most – something happens we want to know why and whodunit. Clues are tucked among the story for the reader to discover the answer to the riddle. Think: *Memento*, *Murder in the Nile*, and *Citizen Kane*.

FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

If you had to write a script, which story structure would you use? Why?

- Character driven stories -The Quest or The Transformation
- Plot driven stories- The Pursuit or The Riddle (mystery)

write a one page essay to turn in via email tomorrow for (15pts.).

PROJECT

Visit www.script-o-rama.com or any other website with screenplays and choose any screenplay to read from:

- ✓ The Film Script section

You will use the **Screenplay Report protocol** in Mr. Soto's website to complete your report and turn it in by October 31, 2023. The project's value is 100 pts.



Next:

MORE SCREENPLAYS

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